

THE SABRES' BLADE

December 18, 1996

South Mecklenburg High School

8900 Park Road

Charlotte, North Carolina, 28210

Volume XXIV

Grossek leaves South for Ranson Middle

By Cliff Mauriello

South Mecklenburg music teacher and band director Henry Grossek accepted a position as an Assistant Principal at Ranson Middle School. Grossek has been teaching at South since 1986. He resigned to pursue a career in education administration.

"I came to Charlotte in the hopes of moving up in administration," said Grossek, who earned a Masters in Administration in 1984.

Grossek will not teach music or direct band at Ranson.

"This is my twentieth year teaching band and directing. It's hard to put down the baton, but at some point, the career has to take over," said Grossek.

Grossek's position as band director has given him valuable administrative experience. His duties have required him to arrange for band transportation, establish budgets, deal with parent booster clubs and public relations, and recruit students for band.

"The difference is I am going from good kids to bad kids. The kids in band want to be there. The kids I'm going to be working with don't want to be where they are," said Grossek.

Grossek is not through with music. He is looking forward to judging competitions, guest directing honors bands, and playing in the UNCC graduation band.

Grossek considers the revival of the band program his most important contribution to South Mecklenburg. The school has added four bands during his tenure and increased student participation in the music program, which has become one of the most recognized in the state.

Mr. Grossek will miss the faculty and the support of Dr. Knox.

"Dr. Knox is an administrator who appreciates what it is we are doing. When it comes to supporting teachers, he is at his best. South Meck is very lucky to have him. South also has some of the best teachers and people I've ever met," said Grossek.



South Meck's own Mr. Holland

Reassignment proposals incite controversy

By Katie Payerle

Just when you thought it was over... two more high schools are joining the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system. Anytime a new school is added to the system, changes in pupil assignment must take place. This time is no exception. Superintendent Eric Smith has submitted three reassignment proposals to the School Board to be voted on in December. As usual, intense controversy has arisen over the possible changes.

The School Board has outlined some guiding principles that they follow when reassigning students. They include the continuation of educational excellence (no school or program can suffer), racial integration of the system, continuity in peer groups, equal transportation responsibilities for all races, preparation for future growth in the system, and community involvement. All three proposals significantly improve racial balance for all schools in the system, especially Providence and South Meck. They will also balance the utilization and capacity numbers. Right now, South Meck students utilize 95% of the maximum capacity. The proposals would put South at 112-119% capacity. Providence, currently at 123% capacity, would

be relieved of much of its overcrowding. The plans would put Providence at about 106-110% capacity.

The controversy over these proposals is centered in Southeast Charlotte, which is primarily the Providence district. According to all three proposals, students in the neighborhood of Ballantyne and other Southeast areas will be assigned to Olympic High School, seventeen miles away from Providence. Parents in the Southeast district have organized a group to fight the School Board on their proposals. Linda McCall, the leader of the group has outlined her position of their team.

They support equal technological supplements at all schools, more effective discipline in the classroom, and neighborhood schools. McCall's group believes that neighborhood schools would allow parents to take a more active role in the education of their children. The School Board fears that neighborhood schools will oppose efforts to have a racially integrated school system.

A fourth plan has recently been developed by the School Board. According to this plan, some Providence students would attend South Meck instead of Olympic High.



Another win adds another set of trophies for the NJROTC

Sabre Rifles and Blue and Gold Waves win again

By Keith Mason

The South Meck NJROTC Sabre Rifles and Blue and Gold Waves drill teams competed in a county drill meet in early November at North Meck High School.

On a cool, rainy day the drill team commanders, LT. Danielle Mershon, LCDR Katie Patton, and MCPO Chauncey Phillips led their teams to first place overall in competition against many other high schools across the county. The female and male drill teams exhibited a dazzling performance in precision military drill.

Cadet Commander Bullard and MCPO Phillips expressed their satisfaction in the way the unit competed. Both drill teams won first place overall in all

events. This winning tradition in South Meck NJROTC has been present for the last twenty years. The Assistant Naval Science Instructor, Senior Chief Carl Posey, USN (Ret.) has been with the unit for fifteen years as they achieved victory in military drill.

In the eyes of many, the drill teams are the heartbeat of the unit. Since 1988 these select cadets have participated in 28 local, regional, and national drill competitions. Each competition had from a minimum of 12, to a maximum of 70 opposing teams. In every contest, South Meck has marched away a winner, one third overall-win, three second place overall-wins, and twenty-four first place overall-

wins

The Sabre Rifles have gone on to accomplish larger awards in the past such as National Drill Competitions in 1992, 1994, and 1995 between over 250 schools across the country. Many of the members of the Sabre Rifles and Blue and Gold Waves think of this win as just another set of trophies, for their goal is winning the National Drill Competitions later this year.

The NJROTC unit has brought a great deal of pride to South Mecklenburg. This would never have been possible without the cadets and the pride they hold for the uniforms they wear, the unit and the school they represent, and the country in which they live.

Charles Hardin wins prestigious award
Page 7



Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus
Page 8

Celebrate holidays around the world
Page 4& 5



Senior Exit, Senior Pain

By Mike Klein

Senior exit project, which entails a written research paper, a visual, and an oral presentation in front of a panel of judges, is under School Board consideration as a requirement for graduation. While this will only affect approximately 25% of the student body this year, it will eventually affect underclassmen and in two years will be a state-wide headache.

Last year's trial run of senior exit projects understandably had a few kinks. They included different due dates for different English teachers, teachers mentoring too many students, and even a case of academic dishonesty at another high school. How easily these problems can be corrected is yet to be seen.

The main gripe about the idea is its childlike approach. What I mean by this is the manner in which students are required to complete their respective projects. Between having a teacher mentor to review work, filling out progress checks, and writing rough and final drafts, we are being treated like children.

Throughout the thirteen years of my schooling, I have done project upon project for every class and every teacher imaginable. The notion of doing one more to be able to graduate from the system does not annoy me,

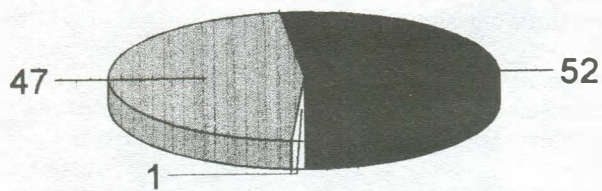
but the fact that after all the student work done over the years, pupils still can't be trusted on their own.

I ask you: isn't finishing tasks on an individual basis the best test of one's readiness to enter college or the workforce? Isn't living successfully by oneself the ultimate goal of our education? And if so, then why can the students not put the knowledge and motivation that they have presumably given their most vital years to achieve, to the test with a completely independent assignment?

Whatever the reason, a looser version of the senior exit project should be implemented to better gauge if students are prepared for graduation. This means no teacher mentors (it is my understanding that most teachers aren't terribly fond of doing this anyway), no progress checks, no mandatory rough draft, and the hiring of a professional judging staff to replace the current staff of volunteers. The project's parameters would be set forth within the first week of school, and the research paper, visual, and presentation would all be due the first week in May.

I have nothing against the concept of a senior exit project, providing it remains the responsibility of the senior.

Random Survey of Students: Should Marijuana Be Legalized?



■ Yes ■ No □ Undecided

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Should the United States legalize marijuana?

Point

By Kevin Ballantine and Katie Payerle

The terms *pot*, *reefer*, *grass*, *Mary Jane*, and *Judy Fly* all have one thing in common. They are names for marijuana, one of the most popular drugs in society. Marijuana is certainly a dangerous drug; however, the danger revolves around crime and dangerous ingredients added by dealers. Legalization of marijuana could reduce these problems and make the drug available to patients who need it.

Cancer kills thousands of people each year. It has been proven that THC in marijuana can be used to treat cancer. It is not fair to legally deny such treatment to a terminally ill patient. Sales could be regulated the same way alcohol and tobacco are regulated. The prohibition of marijuana has not prevented its use. If marijuana were legal, it could be taken off the streets and put into stores where it could be sold cheaply with little risk of added substances. It would virtually eliminate the black market for pot.

Most drug related crimes are thefts to pay off dealers. If marijuana were legal and the black market eliminated, pushy drug dealers would not be a threat.

There is concern that legalizing marijuana will lead to the legalization of more harmful drugs; however, given the controversy over marijuana, each drug would be examined with the same scrutiny. Clearly, legalizing a dangerous and addictive drug such as cocaine can never be seriously considered. Marijuana, however, is unique. There is scientific evidence that it is less harmful and less addictive than alcohol and nicotine.

We as a society must acknowledge the fact that marijuana is a prevalent drug regardless of its legality. Marijuana, like all drugs, is dangerous if abused. Legalizing it would make it safer for those people who insist on abusing it, it would help society by cutting down on drug related theft, and would make marijuana available to those it can help.

Counterpoint

By Cliff Mauriello

This article is not about the scientifically proven detrimental effects of marijuana. The text books in ninth and tenth grade health presented evidence that showed smoking marijuana could lead to severe medical and mental problems. The issue at stake is not a medical issue; it is a social issue. If the government allows the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes, the United States will have started down the slippery slope toward the legalization of harder drugs.

Legalizing marijuana for the treatment of cancer symptoms appears harmless, but danger is lurking beneath the surface. If cancer patients can be treated with pot, what prevents a doctor from prescribing marijuana to patients with less serious diseases? What prevents a quack from giving pot to teenagers?

The precedent that we set by legalizing marijuana is the compromise of integrity. Ever since the sixties, adults have been telling students not to smoke pot. Now they are saying it is OK to smoke marijuana to treat cancer. This is very confusing to teenagers. The government is sending mixed signals.

The government is also showing that it has no courage to take a stand on the issue. When the legalization of marijuana was placed on the California ballot, the state legislature was, in effect, saying, "We're scared to make this decision. If we ban pot for everybody, we may look like reactionaries. If we make pot available to some of the people, we'll look like radicals. We'll let the people decide, and then it won't be our fault when something bad happens." If California had taken a stand, there wouldn't be an issue.

The precedent of compromise is a deadly one. If we legalize marijuana for medicine, we can easily legalize marijuana for commercial use. If we legalize pot, how long will it be before we legalize other drugs like heroin, cocaine, and acid. This hypothesis seems far fetched, but it isn't. A few years ago, no one would have dreamed we would be writing articles over the legalization of marijuana.

Their Take on It

It's a sardine can after all

Why don't we just bring the seventh and eighth graders on over, too? We could pay Food Lion to let us use their parking lot for a couple of classes.

Teachers have also voiced concerns about their class sizes. They are... used to having classes with around 27 or 28 students in them. Class sizes of... 35 turn into environments where teachers are practicing the art of crowd control, as opposed to the art of teaching.

Andrew Thomasson, *The Mirror*, West Charlotte High School.

Teens confront important issues

Today's teens are facing more problems now than teens have ever before. Not only do they have to worry about issues concerning family and school, but violence, drugs, lack of morals, and future plans also shade teenagers' outlooks.

Today's teens are facing a lot more than their parents did when they were the same age. Drugs and violence are robbing our youth of their innocence, and sexually transmitted diseases are killing more and more everyday.

Shannon Bailey and Tiffany Drum, *Bow and Arrow*, West Mecklenburg High School.

Ignorance, step aside

There is more to human beings than what meets the eye. What a person might present on the outside is only a form of expression. Why should a human being be forced to blend in with society's standards? Why should people care so much about what others perceive them to be that they would change their way of dressing or personality for others? We as a society should admire one's individuality and uniqueness.

Why is it that if a student in our society does not dress the way that the society around us thinks he/she should, he is labeled a "Freak"?

Andrea Petruzelli, *North Star*, North Mecklenburg High School

Faded Glory

By Warren Foster

The sight of our flag used to fill me with a sense of pride and honor. I see the flag now and it fills me with sadness. I think about how people used to hold it in high esteem, but now it is commonly burned by people who don't understand what it means to be an American.

America has a proud heritage. Men have given their lives to defend her values, traditions, and beliefs. They have died in defense of her flag, a symbol of everything she stands for. Many Americans take their privileges for granted. They don't vote. They are consumed

by apathy; they simply don't care. It is this same apathy that is eating away at the moral fiber of America.

Drugs are prevalent among teenagers, and marijuana and alcohol are the drugs of choice for this generation. People who use these drugs dishonor themselves and their country, and are not worthy of the title, "American."

It may be worthwhile to point out that the Roman Empire, the greatest civilization of its time, was destroyed from within by some of the same problems that are afflicting our country today.

Correction: We were wrong

The Sabres' Blade incorrectly reported in last month's edition that Nikki Harris was first runner up in the Homecoming Queen competition (*Lyon Crowned Homecoming Queen*). In actuality, Kristy Howard earned that honor. *The Sabres' Blade* apologizes for the mistake and hopes that it caused no inconvenience for Miss Howard, Miss Harris, or their families.

Faces in the Crowd



Birthday: October 15, 1978
Preferred Artist: Tori Amos
Favorite Book: Catcher in the Rye
Movie: The Dark Crystal
Car: Green Nissan Altima



Born: February 13, 1979
Favorite Activity: Dancing
Listens to: R & B
Eats: Spaghetti
Preferred Group: Boyz II Men

Lovable Laura

By Nicole Ewing

When Laura Cohen smiles, the whole world smiles with her. "My philosophy on life is smile and be an individual," she said.

Laura is active in school and the community. At South, she takes part in Somedra, Civitan, Ecology Club, Beta Club, Spanish, Art and National Honor Society. She has also participated in the Drama Department, doing everything from management to acting to scenery to house management.

Laura is involved in many organizations concerned with cultural diversity and violence. She is in City at Peace, where she writes and performs plays about important issues, and she is a counselor at the summer camp Anytown. This past summer she was a facilitator at the 1996 Youth Diversity Conference at UNCC where she led workshops about racial

diversity. "Doing this makes me believe that when people really care enough about something, they can make a difference," Laura said.

This senior is a teacher's delight. Even though she has tough AP and AG classes, she is always upbeat and positive. "Laura works to her potential, learns for the sake of learning and never expects anyone to give her any special consideration," said Mrs. Russo, Laura's European history teacher.

Laura hopes to attend Swarthmore College, major in English and become an English professor. She doesn't want to be famous, but she does want to make a difference in society and give back what has been given to her. All she wants to do now is be independent and be her own person.

Fairest of them all

By Branna Calloway

Dionya Fair is a unique blend of compassion and scholarship. Her compassion is marked by a mission to rid the world of racial violence. Scholarship is shown by Dionya's excellent academic record.

Dionya is an all-around student. She balances her time between academic and extra-curricular activities and makes good grades in courses like Calculus AP and English 12AG.

Fair shows lots of school spirit. She is captain of the Lettergirls and the girl's track team. She participates in DECA, SWV, Peaceful Sabres, SOMEDRA, the Sabre Pep Club, and is a principle violinist in the school orchestra.

She wants to be a graphics designer after she graduates from college. Dionya takes Drafting, Advertising Communications, and

Production. Mr. Lacek, the Advertising Communication and Production teacher, commented that he "thinks Dionya will go far in the graphics design field."

After the bell rings, Dionya heads for Lettergirl practice. She works at McDonald's on Tyvola Road. On other days, her schedule includes orchestra practice.

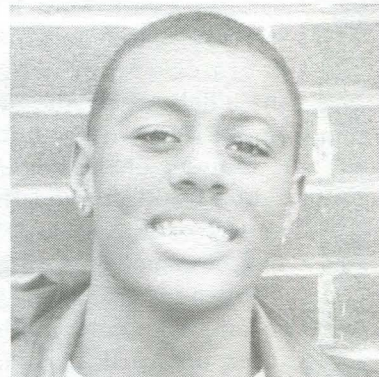
In her spare time, Dionya likes to go the movies and to spend time playing her instruments. She also enjoys spending time with her friends.

Anyone who knows Dionya will agree that she's a go-getter. She is vigorous but gentle and friendly. Dionya is a hard worker but doesn't forget how to have fun. Her motto to live by is: "When you know you could have done better, you've failed."

Should
random
searches be
allowed?



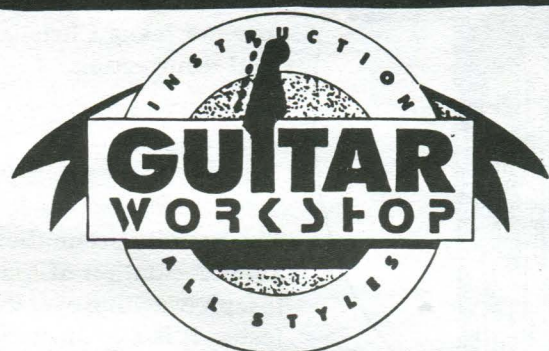
"I think the searches are wrong because they invade your privacy."
Michelle Baker, 9th Grade



"I feel that random searches should not take place. The student should be aware of the search before it occurs."
Dennis Heggins, 11th Grade



"Random searches are irrelevant because we come to school to learn, not to be searched for illegal items."
Clint Page, 9th Grade



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Happy Holidays from the Sabres' Blade staff.

The great American "melting pot" is home to people of all religions. The student body of South Meck is almost as diverse as the population of the United States. Each religion celebrates holidays that are as unique as its beliefs. This page is a tribute to those holiday celebrations.

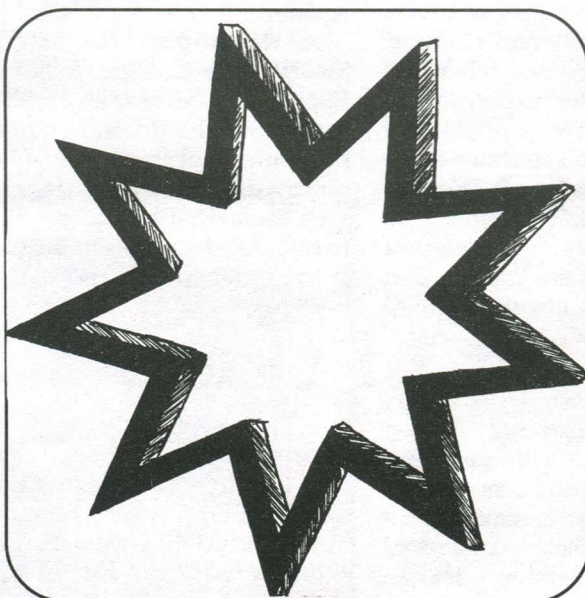
Artwork by Lauren Coggins, Coordinator and layout: Katie Payerle

Baha'i

by Walter Boyle

Baha'i is a faith which has its roots in Islam. The religious leader of the Baha'i faith is called *the Bab*, which means "the gate." *The Bab* is considered the spokesman for the imam. The people of the Baha'i celebrate their major holiday in late April or early May. It is the festival of Ridvan which celebrates when Baha'u'llah entered the garden of Ridvan. Baha'u'lla, the founder of Baha'i, left Baghdad and crossed the Tigris river into a garden, which he named the Garden of Ridvan (or "Paradise" in Persian.) After entering the garden on April 21, 1863, Baha'u'lla and his followers stayed for twelve days. The Baha'i people celebrate the first, ninth, and twelfth days of the followers' stay at

Holy Days. While Baha'u'lla was in the garden he revealed many sacred writings and tablets. After that, he announced that he was the promised one of all God's Manifestations and had come to unite the people of the world. Baha'u'lla left the garden on May 2; that date marks the beginning of the Baha'i faith. It is the holiest of the festivals.



The nine point star is the symbol of Baha'i

Judaism

by Kevin Ballantine

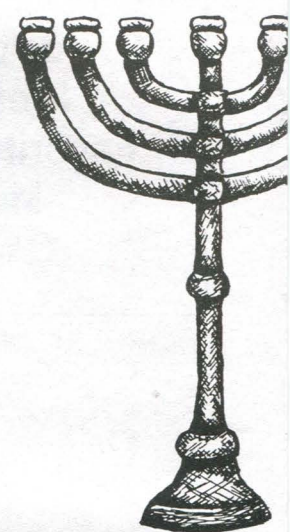
The Jewish religion is represented by many students here at South. The wintertime holiday is Chanukah. Chanukah means "The Festival of Lights". This year, the festival takes place from December 5 to December 12. Contrary to popular belief, Chanukah is considered only a minor holiday in the religion. The holiday is a celebration of the Jewish victory over the Syrians. When the Syrians destroyed the Jewish temple, there was not enough oil for all of the lamps needed for battle. There was only enough for that one night. The miracle that surrounds Chanukah is that the one night oil supply actually lasted eight nights.

The menorah, a symbol of Chanukah, has nine candles. It has four on each side and one long candle in the middle. Each day of Chanukah, the Jewish people light a new candle using the middle candle. Parents and relatives give gifts each day.

The traditional menorah only has seven candles.

The dreidel is another symbol of Chanukah. The dreidel is a top which has four sides, each with a different Hebrew letter on it. The dreidel is used in a game that is played during this time of year.

Many people at South Meck celebrate Chanukah. Cathcart, a senior, said, "The holiday season is a great time to be with family and celebrate your religion."



The seven candle menorah is a traditional symbol of Judaism

Holidays Around the World

What is the real meaning of Christmas?

by Cliff Mauriello

Editor's note: The opinions expressed in the following article are those of the Editor-in-Chief and not those of the Sabres' Blade staff. The article's purpose is not to be preachy, but to explain what the Christian believes about the significance of Christmas.

"Would somebody please tell me what Christmas is really all about?" Charlie Brown asked.

In the TV special *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, the famous *Peanuts* character becomes disillusioned by commercialism during the Christmas season. He strives to rediscover the true meaning of Christmas, fearing that it has been overlooked by his friends and society.

The true meaning of Christmas has not been overlooked. It has been misunderstood. Everybody already knows that Christmas isn't about Santa Claus

and his eight tiny reindeer. If the reader were to ask any person in Charlotte about what Christmas is all about, that person, if educated, will say it is the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth.

So what is significant about that? Billions of people have had birthdays, but usually one isn't celebrated after a person dies. If Jesus Christ is just another person, why do we celebrate His birthday 2,000 years after He was born?

The Christian believes that Jesus Christ isn't just another person. The Christian believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, born to save a fallen world from sin and God's just judgment. The miracle of Christmas is this: God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to die for it. The Christian is celebrating his salvation,

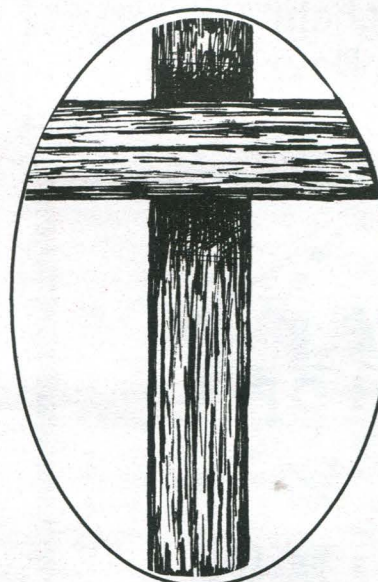
as well as the birth of his sovereign Lord, God, and King.

Linus van Pelt knew this was the answer. He quoted the following passage from the Gospel of Luke for Charlie Brown:

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good tidings of great joy. Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'"

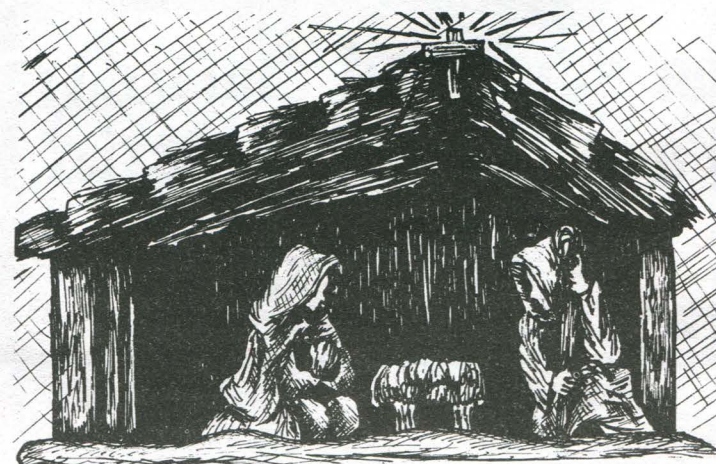
Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.'" Luke 2:8-14.

Christianity



The cross (left) is the sacred symbol of Christianity. It represents Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

The nativity scene (below) is a representation of Mary and Joseph watching over the Baby Jesus. It is a common sight in Christian homes near the Christmas season



What do They Believe?

Beginnings:

Abraham, who lived in the Middle East about 4,000 years ago is considered the founding patriarch.

Divinity:

One God, referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Practice:

Jews worship at home or a synagogue, where parts of the Torah are read and prayers are chanted

Beliefs:

The Ten Commandments: Laws given by God to the Jewish leader, Moses.

Covenant: Special agreement between God and Abraham; in return for God's love and protection, Jews must serve God and form a just society.

Messiah: Jews believe a Messiah-the annointed one- will come to correct wrongs and defect their enemies.

Information provided by The Raleigh News and Observer

Hinduism

by Katie Payerle

Every year around the end of October or beginning of November, there is a party with lots of dancing, colorful, traditional costumes, and wishes of *Sal mu baluk*. That phrase means Happy New Year in *Gujrati*, the native language of many members of the Hindu faith. *Diwali*, the Hindu New Year's Eve celebration, falls immediately after the Nine Day Dance in the middle of Octo-

ber. Both holidays make up an important part of the Hindu religion.

To celebrate Diwali, people have parties and many other activities. Sometimes, people perform plays and dances onstage for other members of the community. "It's fun. You get to meet everybody and talk to them," said Tina Changela, a student at South. On the day of the New Year, the Hindus go to more private gatherings in

people's houses.

The Nine Day Dance in the middle of October celebrates a religious war that took place in India. Participants in this holiday dress up and dance at night for nine consecutive days. "It's so much fun," said Changela. "Everyone's doing the same dance and it's so nice. You get to see your friends. I wish it could be every day."



The sacred symbol of the Hindu faith is the written form of the sanskrit word "om" which is used as an object of meditation

What do they believe?

Beginnings: Dates back to 3000 B.C.

Practice:

Worship In congregations and in domestic shrines.

Beliefs:

Karma: A person's actions determine one's future, next life.

Reincarnation: Individual's soul is born with an appropriate body to undergo consequences of Karma.

Forms of the Divine:

Brahma: creator

Vishnu: Preserver

Shiva: Destroyer and regenerator.

Information provided by the Raleigh News & Observer

and the World

ISLAM

By Nicole Ewing

"Allahu Akhbar!" These are the words that all Muslims say when they pray. This Arabic phrase means "God is Great" The Islamic religion is surprisingly similar to Christianity and Judaism. Muslims pray to God, they have prophets, a Quran (holybook), and have rituals just like Christians and Jews.

Islam was revealed to Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him), an Arab prophet, when a vision came to him while he was meditating. The Angel Gabrielle came to him with messages from Allah, the Arabic word for God.

Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was the final prophet and began to teach Islam to the people. From there it grew into a very widespread religion and one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

Muslims go by Lunar Months, which means that

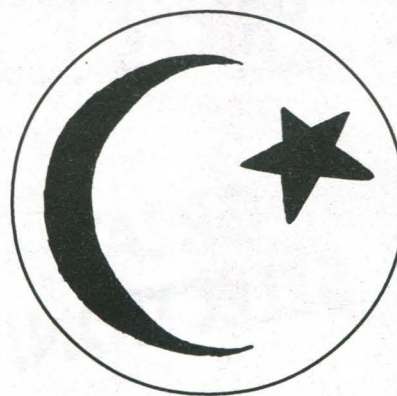
their year is determined by the moon. Therefore, their holidays follow a lunar schedule. The three major holidays are Eid At-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, and Ramadan. During Ramadan, Muslims must fast for a month, eating and drinking nothing from sunrise to sunset. At the end of Ramadan is Eid Al-Fitr.

As you may know, Muslims have rituals that they must follow. Five times a day, they face northeast towards the Ka'aba in Mecca and pray. Their prayers include saying parts of the Quran, which is their holy book. They go to the mosque, which is the Muslim place of worship. Friday is their holy day. There are no pictures or profiles of God or his prophets and messengers (Peace Be Upon Them) in this religion of peace.

Muslim women must cover up the attractive parts of their body like their arms, legs, and

hair. "I feel respected and represent my religion well wearing my religious dress," said Mona Banawan, a Muslim girl who attends South. Unfortunately, many people do not understand Islam which makes them believe false comments about this religion. The Muslim women are not looked down upon as most people think. On the contrary, all Muslims are equal in Allah's eyes. Men and women have their own different tasks in life which are very important in the life cycle.

Islam is an extremely interesting religion. The people who follow its beliefs are very dedicated and serious about what the believe in. *Allahu Akhbar* The religion of Islam, the phrase Peace Be Upon Him/Them should be written each time a profit or messenger of God (Peace Be Upon Them) is written.



The crescent and star make up the sacred symbol of the Islam religion

What do they Believe?

Beginnings:

Based of the revelations of Mohammed, a prophet born in Saudi Arabia around 570 A.D.

Practice:

Duties: Profession of the unity of God and the prophethood of Mohammed, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage or haji: All able Muslims must make a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city, at least once.

Worship: Muslims worship five times a day, at home, at work, or with a congregation. An imam or scholar leads special services at a mosque on Fridays.

Beliefs:

Life and Death: Life is a proving ground, death the gateway to eternal life; believers should follow a strict moral code.

Judgment day: Angels in heaven record a person's deeds; on the last day, the book is read and all the dead are rewarded or punished.

Information provided by the Raleigh News & Observer

Busy winter ahead for South Meck Choral Department

By Cliff Mauriello

The halls are alive with the sound of music. South Mecklenburg's Choral Department has taken part in four concerts, has been invited to participate in three other music functions, and will be presenting its annual concert at the end of December.

The South Mecklenburg Chamber Singers provided holiday music at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville. The Singers auditioned by submitting a performance tape. The tape was accepted, and the singers were invited to perform on November 21 in a holiday concert. The performance took place in the Winter Garden Room. Choirs also performed at Founder's Hall on December 2, The Charlotte Plaza on December 11, and First Union Bank on December 13.

Shawn Millington represented South Mecklenburg High School

in Winston-Salem at the Music Editors Convention in November. Shawn prepared special music and met the challenge of sight reading new music to pass this strict and competitive audition. Fifteen hundred students tried out and only 150 singers were selected. This was Shawn's second year to participate. Eight students passed auditions to participate in the Mars Hill College Choral Festival in February. Michelle Cashio, Kendall Hunter, Heather Macy, Joe Pridgen, Charity Ann Rich, Amanda Vance, David Walton, and Leslie Weaver will join a three hundred member choir. The choir will be directed by Paul Oakley, a nationally known conductor.

Eight students will represent South Mecklenburg High School in a choral festival at Furman University. Josh Acuff,

Doug Blumenthal, Melanie Cooper, Shavon Falls, Julie Leonard, Shawn Millington, Jernetta Robinson, and Joey Walter will complement 120 other North and South Carolina high school students in the choir.

South Mecklenburg Chamber Singers and the Women's Chamber Ensemble submitted a performance tape to Duke University and have been invited to perform on January 12, 1997 for the Sunday Morning Service held in the Duke Chapel.

The South Mecklenburg Choral Music Department will present its Winter Concert on Thursday, December 19 at 7:30 in the auditorium. Six choirs and several soloists will perform seasonal and traditional music. Admission is free; however, donations will be accepted to purchase a new sound system.

Lights, Camera...

By Lauren Coggins

Although the new Film and Literature class is only in its beginning stages, it is already popular among students. The class, taught by Mrs. Halling, examines the relationships between films and literary works and studies filmmaking techniques.

Many students are under the impression that the class watches movies every other day. Wrong. Contrary to popular opinion, work plays as large a role as in many other courses. Although films are important, students have quizzes, tests and projects as well. Students completed a project in which they chose scenes from films and constructed their own storyboards. Storyboarding plays a vital role in the making of a film, outlining characters' actions and dialogue, as well as determining camera placement and other details.

Students read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and later saw the film version by Francis Ford Coppola. Comparing the book with the film, they saw in action many filmmaking techniques learned in class. They were also seen in the classics *Citizen Kane* and *In the Heat of the Night*.

**Senior Mysteries
Answers:
Robert Mitchell
Joyce Black**



Melissa Paradise and Jte Hagin share a moment.

Drama Department does it again

By Katie Payerle

The Theatre Four class and Dance class went to a regional theatre contest at CPCC on Friday, November 15. The theatre class performed *Medea* by Christopher Durang and Wendy Wasserstein. The dance class performed *Insomnia*, an interpretive dance recital with music and motion based on the poetry of *london*. At the competition, *Medea* received a superior rating, a costuming award, a directing award, and an ensemble acting honorable mention. Jennifer Lyon, who played *Medea* received Best Actress, and Kris Bostedo, who played the angel *ex machina*, received an honorable mention for acting. "The final result exceeded all of my expectations," said Ms. Guzman

of the play.

Insomnia received a rating of Excellent from one judge and Superior from the other. "The girls in *Insomnia* are extremely accomplished dancers. Although some of them have choreographed dances before, they haven't ever had so many restrictions placed on their work. It's probably the hardest thing they've ever had to do and I'm so very proud of them," said Ms. Curl, theatre and dance teacher.

Theatre Three's production of *Love, Death, and the Prom* by Jon Jory was performed on December 4 and 5. "I'm extremely proud of my students, I think they do a wonderful job," said Kelly Blackburn, student teacher and director of the play.

Sick? Read about these diseases

By Lauren Coggins

Wait! Before you sneeze or cough, would you please cover your mouth? You could be unknowingly spreading a deadly virus, and no one wants one of those. If you don't normally cover your mouth when you sneeze, maybe there are a few books you should read.

If you feel like you are coming down with a cold, you might be interested in reading Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone*, *Outbreak*, by Richard Tine, or *Carriers*, by Patrick Lynch. Not only will they entertain you while you are at home sniffing and coughing, they will also improve your etiquette and make you more popular among friends.

Ever heard of Ebola, or filoviruses? All three of the aforementioned books deal with filoviruses, the way they spread, and the fact that they have no cure. Of the three, *The Hot Zone*

is the most factual, explaining the disease in detail and giving lengthy descriptions of symptoms. From this book one learns that in its initial stages, Ebola has the same symptoms as the flu or the common cold. Therefore, the person coughing up a storm in the back of the classroom could be giving you something more than a cold. Don't worry though, just have someone suggest that they cover their mouth if the idea of contracting a deadly virus bothers you.

So far, no strains of Ebola that are lethal to humans have been found in the US, but you never know; you could be the first. So before you sneeze or cough, reach for a Kleenex, a shirtsleeve, or anything handy you can use to cover your mouth. Your friends will gratefully appreciate the politeness of your gesture.

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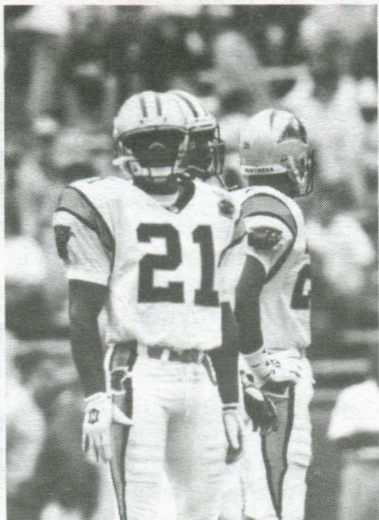
By Jennifer Collins

Rod Smith is an inspirational role model for people of all ages. Smith recently attended South Meck's football awards night dinner. He talked to the team about their love for football and what it was like when he was in high school.

He grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, was an All-American in high school and attended Notre Dame. Smith is currently cornerback for the Carolina Panthers.

Smith's high school coach was most influential. "He was the first guy, outside of my father, to push me to my maximum ability," Smith said. He was trained to endure mental fatigue until his body could no longer take the physical exhaustion.

While growing up, Smith's



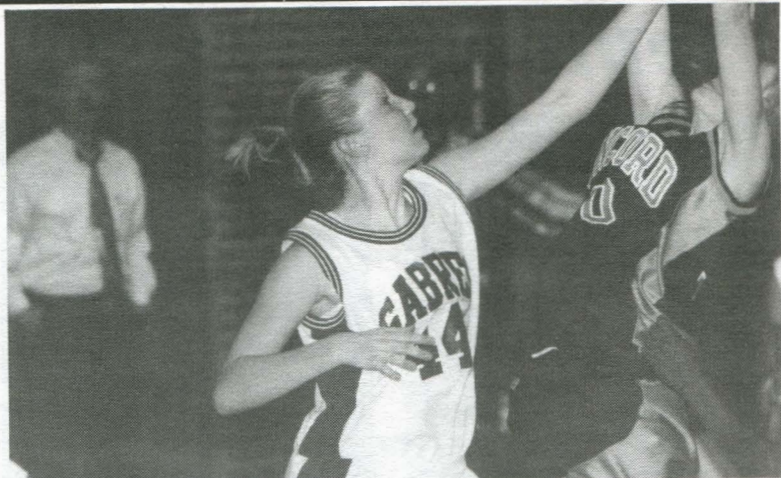
Smith rests between downs.

family had a large influence in his life. His mother was the superintendent for the school system and had a PhD in education and music. Academics

came first. Smith's father was also a football player who played professional ball for three years.

Smith's role model is Dr. J. Although he is a great basketball player, Smith admires him for other reasons. Dr. J. earned his doctorate degree and became the first African American on the Board of Directors for Coca-Cola. His success has disproved the "dumb jock" stereotype.

Rod Smith's advice for high school athletes is to study hard and to take sports and academics seriously. Smith suggests being the last student out of the classroom, always trying to gain more knowledge. Also be the last player off the field, giving complete and best efforts to the last play.



Ashley Porterfield blocks another shot for the record books.

Sabres ready for next step

By Karen Whichard

Preseason polls don't really mean much, and the number five ranking of the Lady Sabres in the *Observer* Sweet Sixteen is already in question after a season opening loss to Asheville, although South defeated fifteenth ranked Concord by four points.

Being ranked number five is due in part to four starters returning from last year's squad, along with the JV's nearly perfect season. As if the team wasn't already full of talented players, the Sabres added Katie Aldridge and Jacquie DuBois, transfers from Harding, along with freshman Terrisha Hardin. When asked about the season, senior guard Kristy Howard said, "I think we will have a successful season." Many teammates agree, and the goal is to

win the conference title, the conference tournament title and the state title.

In the Southwestern 4A East Mecklenburg has been selected the early favorite for the conference crown. With South's height and the experienced guards, the Sabres match up well against East Meck. The key will be the team playing relentless defense, especially against the mountain teams, which have won the state title the past seven out of eight years.

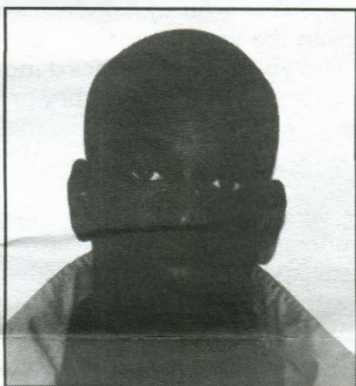
The true test will come this Christmas when South plays in a tournament against Freedom, McDowell, and Crest, all of whom are tough opponents. With hard work and solid team chemistry, the Lady Sabres have the tools for a successful season, and possibly the state title.

Hard schedule will lead Sabre wrestlers to success

By Karen Whichard

Hard work is always important, but playing with heart will be even more critical this season for the South Meck wrestling team. After preseason matches against the toughest teams in the state, the Sabres will have experience to handle the tough competition in the Southwestern 4A conference. A key will be for the young team to focus and not become discouraged at early setbacks.

Last season the Sabres finished with a record of 3-3 in the conference, and this year they should finish in the top three. The main competition will come from Independence, a pe-



Hoskins was fourth in the state.

renial wrestling power, along with Providence and Myers Park. Coach Houghton said, "I think we're going to be fairly

strong. We have new people we're looking at, including several promising freshmen."

Some of the key wrestlers for the Sabres to have a successful season will be Scott Wollat, Gerry Hoskins, Justin Boudrie, Dominique McFadden, Scott Wilson, and Morris Sanders.

The tournament team should also do well. Last season, Charlotte had four state finalists in the competition held in Independence Arena, including Gerry Hoskins from South, who finished fourth. "This year we should have four or six to qualify for state," Coach Houghton said.

South swimmers off to a great start; successful season on the horizon

By Nicole Ewing

The men's and women's swimming and diving teams are looking forward to a very successful season. With the loss of only one senior, and the addition of many new freshmen, they show promise of being a very strong young team.

Despite the small number of swim team members, South is certain that they will compete better than the larger teams. The men's team has only nine swimmers but that doesn't bother them. "Our guys have great sportsmanship. We may not be the fastest or the biggest team, but we definitely have the

most spirit," said captain Mike Pruett.

Last season the women's swim team had a record of 4 and 2. The men's swim team finished fifth in the conference. "I think that we should come in second place in conference. We have a very strong team, and good leadership within our seniors," said Coach Dave regarding the upcoming season.

Tough competition will come against Providence and Myers Park. South will be the underdog, but they are confident that they will do well and surprise the other teams.

"I think that our competition is challenging, but with hard work, I think that the team has a good chance of getting second or third in the conference," said sophomore Melody Milroy.

The diving team hopes to do just as well. "I think that we will do better than last year because we have better divers," said Captain Whitney Ellsworth. They finished third in the conference last year and had one diver make it to the state meet.

The meets start on December 2 and will go until February, culminating with the state meet in March.

Sabres open basketball season

By Cliff Mauriello

South Mecklenburg begins the 1996-1997 season hoping to improve on last year's winning record, where the Sabres finished 13-10. The Sabres will have to replace alumnus, Terrence Tyler, who is now playing at Appalachian State.

The starting lineup at the beginning of the season includes Mike Coppedge, Will Hawkins, Lamont Joyner, Montrice Stitt, and Jelani Patterson. Three of these starters, Hawkins, Coppedge, and Joyner, should be in competition for spots on

the Southwestern 4A All-Conference Team.

South looks to improve on last year's record.

"If everything comes together defensively and offensively, we could win the conference and go far in the state; if not, we could win the state," said senior center Coppedge.

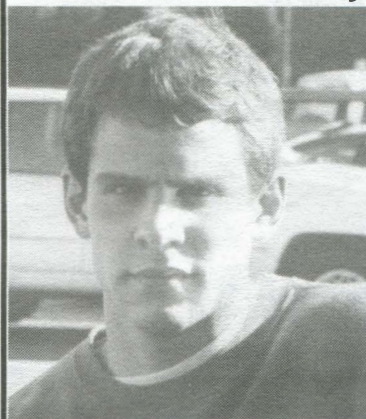
According to Coppedge, South's strength is defense. The bench also has depth.

"Everybody on the team can compete well at this level," said Coppedge.

One advantage the team has is running a quick paced transition game and playing a slow half-court set offense. The defense is also "If it were up to Coach Davis, he'd slow it down. If it were up to the players, we'd run," said Coppedge.

The two biggest games of the year will be the home contests against the Independence Patriots and the resurgent West Charlotte. South split the first two games of the season, winning at Asheville High and losing to the Concord Spiders.

Athletes of the Month



By Cliff Mauriello

Uncharted waters require a special sort of explorer. Mike Mauriello has done what no other Sabre has ever done by winning the individual regional cross country championship.

Mauriello made the All-Conference Cross Country team three times and has finished in the top twenty at the state championships the last three years.

"Running in high school will be an experience I will always treasure for the friends I have made and the disciplines I have learned. However, after this track season, I believe it will be time to move to another chapter in my life," said Mauriello.



By Karen Whichard

Players around the Lady Sabre basketball program know her as "Showtime." Senior guard Chiquita Thomas has lived up to her nickname, and is a vital part of the team.

Thomas has had a successful career at South thus far, including an 18 point performance against Myers Park in the Southwestern 4A Conference Tournament last season and has stepped up in other big games. One of Chiquita's favorite players is Dawn Staley.

Thomas' future plans include playing basketball in college, and she plans, "to get my degree, start a business, and have a family."

Hardin selected Player of the Year.

By Jennifer Collins

South has the best football player in the area! Senior right guard Charles Hardin recently received the Charlotte Touchdown Player of the Year. Hardin was selected among all high school football players in Charlotte to receive this award. The criteria

included having high academic marks, community involvement, and great achievements in the sport. Hardin is a four year starter for the Sabres. The Player of the Year Award is one of the most prestigious awards a high school athlete can receive.

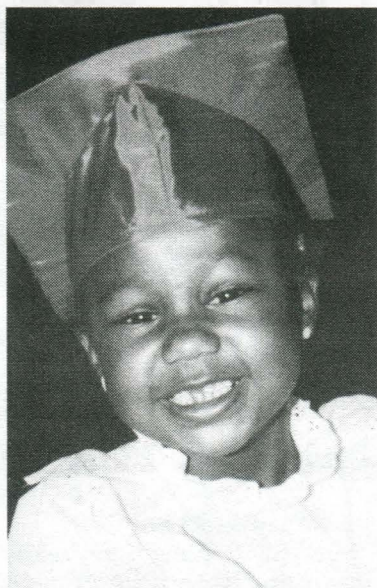
Senior Mysteries



By Jennifer Collins

This senior mystery is a student who is often seen working in the background of many productions here at South, such as the recent production *Medea*. He is currently enrolled in Theatre IV.

This rising playwright recently completed his first play, entitled *Death of a Friend*. Although the story is depressing, it has a magnificent ending and teaches an unforgettable moral. This student hopes to direct the play in a few months, here at South. He has also been involved in musicals at South for the past three years. He is an active member in Somedra and Peaceful Sabres. You may also have recognized him behind the cash register at the local McDonald's. See answer on page 6.



By Warren Foster

This senior mystery is ahead of her time. She was promoted from tenth to twelfth grade for her outstanding academic accomplishments. In addition to being a senior scholar, she is an active member in NAACP, Peaceful Sabres, and National Honor Society. After school, she can be seen driving her Toyota Corolla on the way home where she will grab a quick snack before she goes to Target, where she works as a cashier. Her graduation plans include attending UNCG and majoring in accounting. She hopes to become a CPA after college.

When she's not busy with school or work, she likes to spend time with her boyfriend, bowling or shopping at Learner's. To find out who this mystery is, turn to page 6.

Club Corner



Beta Club members volunteer at Presbyterian Hospital.

Beta Club serves community

The Beta Club is a nationally renowned organization that stresses character, leadership, and achievement in all its members. Here at South Mecklenburg, our members all have a grade point average of 3.8 or higher and participate in service projects every month to benefit the school and community. So far this year, we have held a teacher luncheon, sponsored a German exchange student, volunteered for The Red Cross and Metrolina Association for the Blind to clean the home of a blind man, and made and distributed Halloween

treat bags for children in Presbyterian Hospital. On election day, members volunteered to work at a Kids Voting booth where over a hundred children placed their vote. In addition, Beta Club members have donated supplies to a Child's Place and Crisis Assistant Ministry. For the month of December, we bought and wrapped Christmas gifts for needy children. As a club, we have enjoyed serving the community and strive to continue helping those who are in need.

Submitted by Beta Club President Suma Potiny

If any club is interested in a Club Corner article in *The Sabres' Blade*, please submit a picture and an article to B-10 or Mrs. Berry's box. We reserve the right to edit articles.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

Editor's Note: This article was published by *The New York Sun* on September 21, 1897 in reply to a letter from Virginia O'Hamilton.

Dear Editor: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in the Sun, it's so." Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus? It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in friends! You might get your papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

"You tear apart the baby's rattle to see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, not even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, life, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

"No Santa Claus? Thank God, he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Frances Pharellus Church

South Clubs help young voters

By Andrew Buchert

On Tuesday November 5, six student clubs from South worked Kids Vote polls at local precincts. Volunteers from each of the clubs worked three to three-and-a-half hour shifts assisting the young voters.

South's NAACP worked at Barringer Academic Center, the Beta Club at Pilgrim Congregational Church U.C.C., and the Latin Club at Living Savior Lutheran Church. Civitan helped at Smithfield Elementary School, Close-Up at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and S.O.S. worked at South.

"We were very pleased to have all of these organizations adopt precincts and provide the volunteers for Election Day, and we feel like the involvement has really served as a model for other high schools as well," said Dee Dee Murphy, executive director of Kids Voting North Carolina.

Kids Vote USA was begun in 1992 to promote government awareness among school-age children. Students in Kindergarten through the twelfth grade can participate in the program.

"The essence is to introduce young people to the political process in kindergarten and keep them interested," said Murphy.

Kids Voting USA claims a three to nine percent increase in voter turnout in communities that use the program.

Sabre Recognition

The following students won awards at the North Carolina Mock Trial Competition held in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Courthouse:

Andrew Lee won Best Prosecuting Attorney. Adam Shields was Best Defense Attorney, and Thynisha Keitt was Best Witness. Xan Harrington, Charles Sutter, Colin Haggard, and Emma Juncadella also participated.

Andre Ross and Farell Beam were inducted into the NCASC Hall of Fame for outstanding leaders in N.C. schools. Only fifteen students across the state received this honor.

South Meck Student Council was recognized for 4 years of service to the State Executive Board.

Mr. Howard is the Western District (N.C. Association of Student Councils) Executive Director. He conducted a workshop for advisors at the state and division meetings.

Dennis Cowardin, Andre Ross, and Crystal Muse attended the NCASC State Convention in Raleigh on November 8, 9, and 10. The Student Council presented the project "Help Hungry Kids" at this convention.

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